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THE MOUNTAIN AND THE CAVE

There therefore exists a close relationship between the mountain and the cave, insofar as both are taken as symbols of spiritual centers, just as, moreover, for obvious reasons, all "axial" or "polar" symbols are as well, of which the mountain is precisely one of the principal ones. We recall that, in this respect, the cave must be regarded as situated beneath the mountain or within it, so as likewise to be found in the axis, which further reinforces the link existing between these two symbols, which are in a certain way complementary to one another. It must nevertheless also be remarked, in order to "situate" them exactly in relation to one another, that the mountain has a more "primordial" character than the cave: this results from the fact that it is visible externally, that it is even, one might say, what is most visible from all sides, whereas the cave is on the contrary, as we have said, a place essentially hidden and closed.

One can easily deduce from this that the representation of the spiritual center by the mountain properly corresponds to the original period of terrestrial humanity, during which truth was integrally accessible to all (hence the name Satya-Yuga, and the summit of the mountain is then Satya-Loka or the "place of truth"); but when, as a result of the downward course of the cycle, this same truth was no longer within reach except of a more or less restricted "elite" (which coincides with the beginning of initiation understood in its strictest sense) and became hidden from the majority of men, the cave was a more appropriate symbol for the spiritual center and, consequently, for the initiatic sanctuaries which are images of it.

By such a change, the center, one might say, did not abandon the mountain, but only withdrew from its summit to its interior; on the other hand, this same change is in a certain way a "reversal," by which, as we

have explained elsewhere, the "celestial world" (to which the elevation of the mountain above the terrestrial surface refers) has become in a certain sense the "subterranean world" (although in reality it is not this world that has changed, but the conditions of the external world, and consequently its relation with it); and this "reversal" is figured by the respective diagrams of the mountain and the cave, which at the same time express their complementarity.

As we have said previously, the diagram of the mountain, as well as of the pyramid and the mound which are its equivalents, is a triangle whose apex is directed upward; that of the cave, on the contrary, is a triangle whose apex is directed downward, therefore inverted in relation to the former. This inverted triangle is also the diagram of the heart[1], and of the cup which is generally assimilated to it in symbolism, as we have shown notably with regard to the Holy Grail[2]. Let us add that these latter symbols and those similar to them, from a more general point of view, refer to the passive or feminine principle of universal manifestation, or to one of its aspects[3], whereas those which are schematized by the upright triangle relate to the active or masculine principle; there is therefore indeed here a true complementarity.

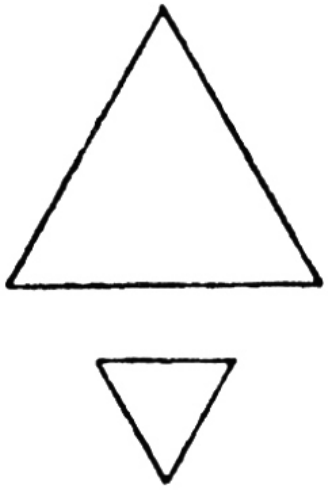

Fig. 12

Moreover, if one places the two triangles one beneath the other, which corresponds to the situation of the cave beneath the mountain, one sees that the second can be considered as the reflection of the first (fig. 12); and this idea of reflection suits well the relation of a derived symbol to a primordial symbol, according to what we said earlier concerning the

1 This figuration can be related to the fact that the Arabic for heart (qulb) literally signifies that it is in an 'inverted' position (maqlub)

2 In ancient Egypt, the vase was the hieroglyph of the heart. The 'cup' of the Tarot also corresponds to the 'heart' of ordinary playing cards.

3 In India, the inverted triangle is one of the chief symbols of the Shakti; it is also that of the primordial Waters.

relationship of the mountain and the cave insofar as they are successive representations of the spiritual center in the different phases of cyclical development.

One might be surprised that we depict the inverted triangle here as smaller than the upright triangle, for, since it is its reflection, it would seem that it should be equal to it; but such a difference in proportions is not an exceptional thing in symbolism: thus, in Hebrew Kabbalah, the "Macroprosopon" or "Great Countenance" has as its reflection the "Microprosopon" or "Small Countenance." Moreover, in the present case there is a more particular reason for this: we recalled, with regard to the relationship of the cave and the heart, the text of the Upanishads in which it is said that the Principle, which resides at the "center of the being," is "smaller than a grain of rice, smaller than a grain of barley, smaller than a grain of mustard, smaller than a grain of millet, smaller than the germ that is in a grain of millet," but also, at the same time, "greater than the earth, greater than the atmosphere (or the intermediate world), greater than the sky, greater than all these worlds together[4]"; now, in the inverse relationship of the two symbols that we are presently considering, it is the mountain which corresponds here to the idea of "greatness," and the cave (or the cavity of the heart) to that of "smallness."

The aspect of "greatness" moreover refers to absolute reality, and that of "smallness" to appearances relative to manifestation; it is therefore perfectly normal that the former should be represented here by the symbol which corresponds to a "primordial" condition[5], and the latter by that which corresponds to a later condition of spiritual "obscuration" and "envelopment."

If one wishes to represent the cave as situated within the very interior (or at the heart, one might say) of the mountain, it suffices to transfer the inverted triangle to the interior of the upright triangle, in such a way that their centers coincide (fig. 13); it must then necessarily be smaller

4 Chandogya Upanishad III, 14. 3.

5 It is known that Dante located the Earthly Paradise at the summit of a mountain, which confirms this situation as that of the spiritual centre in the 'primordial state' of humanity.

in order to be entirely contained within it, but apart from this difference, the ensemble of the figure thus obtained is manifestly identical to the symbol of the "Seal of Solomon," where the two opposed triangles likewise represent two complementary principles, in the various applications of which they are susceptible.

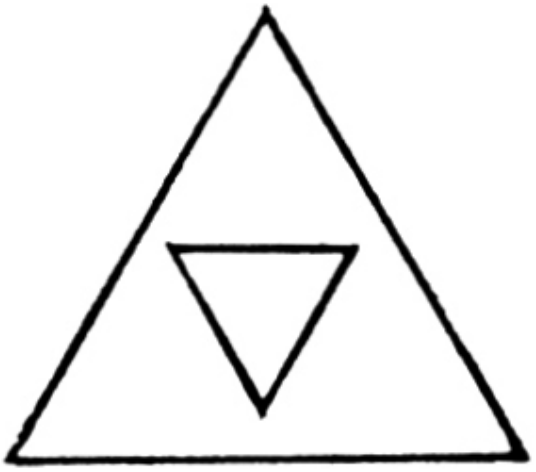

Fig. 13

On the other hand, if one makes the sides of the inverted triangle equal to half those of the upright triangle (we have made them somewhat smaller so that the two triangles may appear entirely detached from one another, but in fact it is evident that the entrance of the cave must be found at the very surface of the mountain, therefore that the triangle which represents it should really touch the contour of the other)[6], the small triangle will divide the surface of the large one into four equal parts, of which one will be the inverted triangle itself, while the three others will be upright triangles; this last consideration, as well as that of certain numerical relations connected with it, does not, to tell the truth, have a direct relation with our present subject, but we shall doubtless have occasion to encounter it again subsequently in the course of other studies.

6 It will be noted, according to the same diagram, that if the mountain is replaced by the pyramid, the pyramid's inner chamber is the exact equivalent of the cave.

THE ERROR OF "PSYCHOLOGISM"

We have very often already had occasion to point out the various distortions, whether conscious or unconscious, to which Westerners subject the Eastern doctrines that they claim to study: unconsciously, when it is only a matter of a wholly involuntary misunderstanding, due simply to the influence of certain preconceived ideas from which they are incapable of freeing themselves; consciously, at least to some degree, when there is added to this the will either to depreciate these doctrines or to make use of them for some kind of propaganda.

In this latter case there falls in particular the attempt made, for some years now, to transform the doctrines in question into "mysticism," and more especially their aspects of an esoteric or initiatic order, although, naturally, all those who accept this interpretation do not realize the purposes to which it actually corresponds. In these very recent times, we have noticed the growing diffusion of yet another interpretation, which, to tell the truth, seems to us rather to fall into the category of unconscious deformations, but which is for all that no less erroneous nor perhaps less dangerous, and which even presents singularly disquieting aspects: we wish to speak of interpretation in "psychological" terms, especially when it is conceived in accordance with the theories of the most recent schools, for then it is no longer merely a matter of a manifest insufficiency, but indeed of a veritable "subversion."

Certainly, what we may call "psychologism," that is to say, the tendency systematically to reduce everything to explanations of a psychological order, is not something entirely new in the Western world; it is, at bottom, only a simple particular case of "humanism," understood, according to the proper sense of the word, as the reduction of all things to purely human elements. Moreover, this "psychologism" implies a very restricted conception of the human individual himself and of his possibilities, for "classical" psychology confines itself to envisaging only some of the most external and most superficial manifestations of

the “mental,” those which are in a more or less direct relation with the corporeal modality of the individual.

This is, let us say in passing, the reason why we always make a distinction between the two terms “psychological” and “psychic,” reserving for the latter its etymological acceptation, incomparably more extensive, since it can include all the subtle elements of individuality, whereas there is only a truly infinitesimal portion of these that falls within the “psychological” domain. Under these conditions, there is no reason to be surprised at the truly childish character that most often attaches to explanations drawn from psychology and claiming to apply to things that in no way fall within its competence, such as religion, for example; this is not to say, moreover, that they are ever entirely harmless, for they have in any case their place among the efforts made by the anti-traditional spirit to destroy the notion of all supra-human reality.

But today there is something else still to be considered: the situation is no longer simply such as we have just indicated, but has noticeably worsened as a result of the invasion of the “subconscious” into psychology, which, extending its domain in a certain sense, but solely from below, risks mixing into everything it touches the worst manifestations of the most inferior psychism.

In this regard, we shall make a remark of a more general scope: ill-advised “traditionalists” rejoice inconsiderately at seeing modern science, in its different branches, emerge from the narrow limits within which its conceptions had hitherto confined themselves, and adopt an attitude less grossly “materialistic” than that which it had in the last century; they even readily imagine that, in a certain way, profane science will thus end by rejoining traditional science, which, for reasons of principle, is something entirely impossible.

What they do not realize is that in reality this is a new stage in the perfectly logical development of the plan according to which the progressive deviation of the modern world is being accomplished;

materialism has played its role there, but now the pure and simple negation that it represents has become insufficient; it has served effectively to bar man's access to possibilities of a higher order, but it cannot unleash the inferior forces which alone can bring the work of disorder and dissolution to its final point.

The materialistic attitude, by its very limitation, still presents only a danger that is itself limited; its "thickness," if one may so speak, shelters the one who adheres to it from certain subtle influences, and gives him in this respect a kind of immunity quite comparable to that of the mollusk which remains strictly enclosed within its shell; but if one makes in this shell, which here represents the ensemble of conventionally accepted scientific conceptions, an opening from below, as we were saying a moment ago with regard to the new tendencies of psychology, these destructive influences will penetrate there immediately, and all the more easily in that, as a result of the negative work accomplished in the preceding phase, no element of a higher order will be able to intervene to oppose their action.

One could further say that the period of materialism constitutes only a kind of theoretical preparation, whereas that of inferior psychism which succeeds it involves a "pseudo-realization," directed in the reverse sense of a true spiritual realization, and thus imitating, insofar as the condition of the profane world as such permits it, the properly "infernal" realization which is that of the "counter-initiation," and thus being for it roughly what the exoteric part of a tradition is in relation to its esoteric part.

One could also conclude from this, among other things, that the "counter-initiation," after having prepared the world by inculcating in it through suggestion all the false or illusory ideas that form the specifically modern mentality, considers the moment to have come to call it to a more direct, if not more conscious, "participation," and thus to constitute a complete "counter-tradition," for which it would itself be what initiation is for every true tradition—except, of course, that spirituality is here totally lacking; and one may indeed say that, in this

respect also, the devil truly appears as the “ape of God.”

It goes without saying, moreover, that the two phases of which we have just spoken are not always rigorously separated in fact, and that one can currently observe their coexistence in many cases; it would indeed be greatly exaggerated to claim that materialistic science has entirely disappeared, and, at the very least, it will doubtless be able to survive for a long time yet in textbooks and popular works.

This is notably the case in psychology, from which these considerations have taken us much less far than one might believe, for it is precisely there that they find one of their clearest and most striking applications; a certain “laboratory psychology,” the culmination of the process of limitation and materialization in which the “philosophico-literary” psychology of university teaching represented only a less advanced stage, and which is no longer really anything but a sort of accessory branch of physiology, still coexists with the new theories and methods, the most “representative” of which, from the point of view where we place ourselves, are those known under the general designation of “psychoanalysis.”

We shall even add that a “psychoanalyst” may very well still be a materialist, by the effect of his previous education and by the ignorance in which he remains of the true nature of the elements that he studies or brings into play; is not one of the most singular characteristics of modern science that it never knows exactly what it is really dealing with?

There is certainly much more than a simple question of vocabulary in the very significant fact, in itself, that present-day psychology never envisages anything but the “subconscious,” and not the “superconscious,” which should logically be its correlative; this is indeed, beyond any doubt, even if those who employ such terminology do not realize it, the expression of an extension that operates solely downward.

Some even adopt, as a synonym or equivalent of “subconscious,” the term “unconscious,” which, taken literally, would seem to refer to an even lower level, but which, in truth, corresponds less exactly to reality; if what is in question were truly unconscious, we do not even see very well how it would be possible to speak of it, and especially in psychological terms.

Be that as it may, what is still worthy of remark is the strange illusion by virtue of which psychologists come to consider states as all the more “profound” insofar as they are simply more inferior; is there not already there, as it were, an indication of the tendency to go against spirituality, which alone can be said to be truly “profound,” since it alone touches the very principle and center of the being?

Let us also remark that, by the appeal to the “subconscious,” psychology tends more and more to rejoin “metapsychics,” in which, by a coincidence at least strange, certain “traditionalists” today place hopes as unjustified as those inspired in them by the new orientation of ordinary science; and, to the same extent, it inevitably draws nearer to spiritism and to other more or less similar things, all of which ultimately rely on the same obscure elements of inferior psychism.

If these things, whose origin and character are more than suspect, thus appear as “precursory” movements of recent psychology, and if the latter comes, even by a roundabout path, to introduce the elements in question into the current domain of what is accepted as “official” science, it is very difficult to think that the true role of this psychology, in the present state of the world, could be other than that which we indicated previously.

The domain of psychology not having extended upward, the “superconscious,” as we were saying a moment ago, remains just as completely foreign and closed to it as ever; and when it happens to encounter something that relates to it, instead of recognizing its ignorance in this regard, it claims to annex it purely and simply by assimilating it to the “subconscious.”

We find here again that confusion of the psychic and the spiritual to which we have already drawn attention, aggravated further by the fact that it is with what is lowest in the psychic domain that it occurs; it is in this that the “subversion” to which we alluded at the beginning resides, and it is this that takes place notably, as we shall explain still more completely later on, in the case of the psychological interpretation of Eastern doctrines.

(To be continued.)